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In point of style most teachers will agree that an abundance of fine writing is not a trustworthy means of imbuing young people with genuine enthusiasm for good literature. A student will not love Milton the more for hearing that 'his youthful feet, like those of his compeers, strayed in fields full of blossoms; but theirs were the lush meadows of the lowlands, his the high pastures close beneath the everlasting snows. The light of the upper air is in the cool brilliance of the flowers he tenders us.' The Freshman's style does not improve under the influence of such English as: 'He was not a country boy, steeped in the profound love of Nature, as Wordsworth was, he was city-bred;' or, 'Close consecutive discussion of the text is the best method to draw near to a great author;' or, 'The plays of Dekker are alit with pure poetry.'

After all, the book seems to deserve some attention, at least from the reviewer. The reasons are two in number. First, better books for the purpose than this are already available, whose right and lawful place is menaced by the advent of an inferior one. Secondly, this book is not unique, but typical, and any encouragement carelessly bestowed upon it only tends to make the species a prolific one, especially in the field of English.

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### DIVINA COMMEDIA.

*Tavole schematiche della Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri* compile dal Prof. Dr.

LUIGI POLACCO, seguite da 6 *Tavole topografiche in cromolitografia* disegnate dal Mo. GIOVANNI AGNELLI. Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1901. 12mo, pp. x, 167.

THERE are many aids to the study of the *Divina Commedia* in the way of commentaries, essays, indexes, etc., but Dr. Polacco is the first to offer us a Baedeker for the mystical journey. With this manual in his hand the pilgrim who would follow

Dietro alle poste delle care piante  
need never lament that

. . . la diritta via era smarrita,

for the whole itinerary is marked out, and

every person and object of interest is indicated in the proper place, so that, notwithstanding the extent and complexity of the journey, it is always easy for the traveler to take his bearings.

Dr. Polacco gives eighteen *Tavole schematiche* for each *cantica* of the *Divina Commedia*, all arranged on the same plan. In the first table of the *Inferno*, for instance, he designates the sins of the several circles, citing one or two descriptive verses of the poem for each sin; in another table, with similar citations, the guardians and ministers of punitive justice; in another, the individual sinners; in another, the punishments and their reasons; in another, the utterances, blasphemies, and vulgarities of the damned; in another, their threats and insults; in another, the similes; in another, familiar quotations. The student who will take the trouble to copy a few of these tables will not only have the order of the poem fixed indelibly in his memory, together with the contents of each table as given by the compiler, but he will also have provided himself with a cabinet of mental pigeonholes in which all his further acquisitions of Dante lore may be conveniently stored.

A guide for the tourist and a method for the student are what the *Tavole schematiche* offer, and they are well adapted for their purposes.

Mr. Agnelli is favorably known to Dante scholars by his *Topocronografia del viaggio dantesco*.<sup>1</sup> In his six *Tavole topografiche* accompanying the present manual he pays less regard than in the former publication to the opinions and maps of other commentators and illustrators, working out the topography from his own careful studies of the poem. He gives us accordingly an *Inferno* whose descent, unlike that of most of those imagined by his predecessors, would not have been impracticable for the traveler of whom Virgil said,

. . . non è spirto che per l' aer vada,

and who said of himself,

. . . io, che meco avea di quel d'Adamo.

His *Purgatorio* is not the huge tower or smoke-stack figured by Russo and Solerti, but it is a real mountain, as Dante repeatedly calls it,

<sup>1</sup> Milano, Hoepli, 1891.

and as Ulysses says it appeared to him :

... N'apparve una montagna bruna  
Per la distanza, e parvemi alta tanto  
Quanto veduta non avea alcuna.

The *Tavole topografiche* are as simple as the complexity of the subject allows and they afford a real help to the comprehension of the poem. The *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* are mapped out with the geometrical accuracy that the marvelous precision of Dante's description permits, details are fully indicated, and the course of the poet's journey is clearly marked. It is only in the descent from the Eighth Circle to the Ninth that the topographer finds an insuperable difficulty in attempting to reduce the particulars of the narrative to a graphic representation.

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#### FRENCH LANGUAGE.

*An Elementary French Reader*, by GASTON DOUAY. New York: Silver, Burdett & Company, 1901. Pp. 297.

THIS new candidate for public favor commends itself at first sight because the book is attractively printed and the page has a pleasing appearance. A closer inspection, however, shows that the book is not well adapted to the use of elementary classes, and it is only for such that a "Reader" has a *raison d'être*. In fact, easy and interesting texts are now furnished in so great a variety that the "Reader" is likely to diminish in popularity. Then, too, this is largely a book of extracts, in spite of the fact that the editor in his preface speaks disparagingly of books so made up.

Considered as an elementary reader, almost all the selections in the book are too difficult. Before the pupil has read a hundred pages, he will have encountered selections from Molière's *L'Avare*, la Bruyère's *Caractères*, Pascal's *Pensées*, Bossuet's *Oraisons Funèbres*, and others of almost equal difficulty and abstruseness.

Another defect in the book is that the notes are excessively numerous. Where there is a vocabulary, there is no need of definitions in

the notes, the proper object of these being to explain matters that can not be properly explained in the vocabulary. Referring, for example, to page 216, it may be said that notes 7, 14, 15, 19, 20, 24, 31, 34, and 36 would better have been omitted and the appropriate definitions given in the vocabulary. Besides, when notes have as many as three figures to distinguish them, they become disagreeably prominent and disfigure the page. A reference to page 53 will show this. On the other hand, such expressions as "états généraux" (p. 9), "corvée" (p. 17), "jeu de paume" (p. 19), "la Terreur" (p. 22), are not explained either in the notes or the vocabulary. True, the text does give a hint of what these words mean, but that is no sufficient reason for not explaining them fully.

Again, some of the notes are too brief to be helpful. To mention only a few instances: p. 17, note 51; p. 21, note 63; p. 22, note 69; p. 25, note 76; p. 28, notes 83 and 85, which should have given a literal translation of the passage in question as well as an explanation. If a pupil gets the literal meaning of each word, he can usually see the meaning of the figurative expression; whereas, if the meaning is merely glossed over for him, he will certainly not recognize it when he meets it in another connection. Thus, if a pupil knew the meaning of each word in the sentence "il met sur pied une armée," he would be very likely to hit on the proper expression in English without any assistance.

Some notes, likewise, have been observed that are either misleading or absolutely incorrect. Thus p. 24, note 74, creates the impression that "un coup d'état" is an act of the government—which is, of course, not correct. P. 35, note 4 would better read "friction matches," since phosphorus is not necessarily present in the "allumette chimique." Concerning p. 58, note 9, it may be said that to translate "épée de chevel" by "vade mecum" would probably not help the student much. This is a case where it would be necessary to define the definition, which ought never to be expected. P. 61, note 26 is not clear and "acommoder de toutes pièces" p. 63, note 53, should not be translated "tear in pieces" because the pupil might take the words liter-